



The Old Ironsides Report

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School Repairs Teach Caring

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BAGHDAD, Iraq - Fort Bragg paratroopers train for war. But their mission in Baghdad is largely one of building for peace.

The contractors and the 82nd soldiers are working against the clock, trying to get all of the schools in the Al Rashid district of Baghdad - home to 2 million people - ready for children to return to classes in about a month. The soldiers see the school repairs as a key to winning the "hearts and minds" of the Iraqi people.

They have won at least one heart already. Fawzi Masad Muhammad was the caretaker of a school about to undergo renovation. He lived in the school with his wife and five children. Soldiers with the 3rd Battalion of the 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment told him he would have to move out.

"I told them I didn't have a home," Muhammad said.

Capt. Adam Cobb runs the battalion's effort to rebuild the schools in their area. Using funds from the battalion's discretionary fund, Lt. Col. John Castles, the battalion's commander, and Cobb had a small, concrete block house built for the family on the school grounds. The house has two rooms, a bathroom with a shower, and carpeted floors.

"You can spend 10 or 20 years and never get a house like this," Muhammad said. He and his family moved in Monday.

About 225 schools are in the area where the 82nd soldiers are overseeing repairs. Cobb said that he gets a sense of satisfaction in seeing them fixed.

Cobb's training is in coordinating artillery support during combat operations, but he has spearheaded the 82nd's role in the rebuilding.

"It helps us show the Iraqi people that we are working to improve their country," Cobb said.

Cobb and other soldiers said it is frustrating that some Iraqis try to undermine their efforts and attack Americans no matter how much good they are doing. Two rockets were fired into the 3rd Battalion's compound Sunday night.

"We're out here helping the Iraqis and stuff like last night happens," Staff Sgt. Larry Pitts said. "Sometimes they don't appreciate what we do."

Bechtel, an international construction company, is coordinating the school repairs throughout Iraq, with local contractors doing the actual work. Bechtel has a \$53 million contract to repair schools, police stations, fire stations and health clinics.

The Coalition Authority running Iraq wants work on more than 1,000 schools completed by October.

Cobb and Pitts, the battalion's fire support noncommissioned officer, spend their days escorting engineers from Bechtel to the schools, where the engineers inspect the work of the local contractors.

Bechtel has its own private security teams, but the paratroopers provide additional security and transportation.

"They've been a lifesaver," said Bechtel engineer Tom Rodenfels. "They'd been out in the neighborhoods so the people were used to seeing them."

Most of the schools were badly damaged by looters, officials say. Some of the schools were missing windows and most of the ceiling fans were gone. Most of the fans and windows have been replaced in several of the schools.

On Monday, workers at the school Rodenfels inspected were concentrating on painting the walls and repairing holes.

Rodenfels said Bechtel is pushing the Iraqi contractors to do quality work, and to have their employees do the job safely. On Monday, many were working barefoot and without hard hats.

The Bechtel engineers say they will get the job done on time. And, they say, Iraqis will learn something about better construction practices in the process.

"We hired local Iraqi engineers to oversee the work," Bechtel engineer Roman Reyes said. "We are training them in construction management. It gives an opportunity to find new talent."

A Smart Tip From 1AD Safety

Improperly Installed Wiring Can Cause Electrical Shock and is a Fire Hazard.

- Don't overload power strips.
- Electrical wiring must be completed by qualified personnel.
- Do not use hot plates in sleeping areas.
- Turn off or unplug electrical items when not in use.
- Keep electrical wires and plugs away from water.
- Move combustible items away from electrical appliances, and wiring.

NEWS

At Least 39 Killed in Stampede in India

NASIK, India (AP) - Thousands of Hindu pilgrims jostling to reach a river for a religious festival toppled a bamboo fence, sparking a stampede Wednesday that killed at least 39 people, mostly women. At least 125 people were injured. The stampede took place as more than a million Hindu devotees assembled for a religious bathing festival in the Godavari River outside the town of Nasik, about 110 miles northeast of Bombay.

Workers Remove Ten Commandments Monument

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) - A moving crew rolled a massive Ten Commandments monument out of the rotunda of the Alabama Judicial Building on Wednesday to comply with a federal court order, as anguished protesters prayed at the building's steps. It took about an hour and a-half to lift the 5,280-pound granite marker and roll it from its public site to a private place in the building.

Okla. Files Charges Vs. WorldCom, Ex-CEO

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) - The Oklahoma attorney general Wednesday filed the first criminal charges against former WorldCom Inc. chief Bernard Ebbers, part of a wider complaint that also named the telecommunications company now known as MCI and other one-time top executives. The complaint accuses Ebbers, the other executives and the company of violating state securities laws by giving false information to investors in 2000. WorldCom collapsed into the nation's largest bankruptcy last year amid an accounting scandal that has grown to \$11 billion.

SPORTS

Philippoussis Wins in U.S. Open 1st Round

NEW YORK (AP) - Mark Philippoussis won his final service game at love with one last exclamation point: an overhead smash winner from deep in the court. Philippoussis, seeded 20th, used serves clocked up to 140 mph to beat 19-year-old qualifier Janko Tipsarevic 6-2, 7-6 (4), 6-4 in the first round of the U.S. Open on Wednesday.

Oddly Enough:

Mom Pleads Guilty to Attacking Stripper

WHEELING, Ill. (AP) -- A woman has pleaded guilty to misdemeanor battery, admitting she attacked a male stripper who failed to meet expectations during her daughter's bachelorette party. Jacqueline McMahon, 52, was sentenced to 30 days of court supervision and ordered to pay \$2,500 restitution to the victim in a plea deal reached Monday. Prosecutors also agreed to drop battery charges against McMahon's daughter, Carrie McMahon, 22, of Loveland, Colo., and bridesmaid Kelly Meyer, 33. The 28-year-old man suffered head injuries, bruises and scratches when he was punched, kicked and hit over the head with a bottle after his July 2002 performance at a hotel in Crystal Lake. Police said attendees at the party became angered when the stripper showed up late and turned out to be a stand-in for the dancer requested by the hosts. Tensions increased when the man allegedly ended his performance sooner than expected and without paying enough attention to the bride.

Chaplain's thought for the day:

Tree in a Cave

A tree grown in a cave does not bear fruit.

--Kahlil Gibran

A tree planted in a cave would soon be stopped short in its growth. There would be no room for it to grow tall or blossom. It would only grow so far and then would grow no bigger. Fear can be like a cave. We sometimes become fearful for the same reason we might enter a cave, looking for protection. But fear protects us from the new ideas and behavior we need in order to grow. Fear can keep us huddling inside it, watching life's opportunities pass by. When fear threatens to enclose us, we can take a deep breath and begin to do what we are afraid of doing. The cave will fade away as we step out into the sun, fresh air, and storms that are a part of growing. God says fear not for I am the Lord your God. Place your fears in God's hands and he will help you grow.

On This Day In History:

August 28th 1968

The Democratic National Convention in Chicago endorses the Johnson administration's platform on the war in Vietnam and chooses Vice President Hubert Humphrey as the party's nominee for president. The decision on the party platform resulted in a contentious three-hour debate inside the convention hall. Outside, a full-scale riot erupted, where antiwar protesters battled with police and National Guardsmen. By the time the convention was over, 668 demonstrators had been arrested and many Americans were stunned by the images of armed conflict in the streets. Humphrey's Republican opponent, Richard Nixon, very successfully used this incident in a call for return to law and order that won him much support during the election campaign.

Source: historychannel.com